

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

This Amendment is in response to the Office Action dated September 26, 2008.

Claims 1 and 8 are pending in the present application. Claims 1 and 8 have been rejected. Claims 1 and 8 have been amended to further define the scope and novelty of the present invention, in view of the Examiner's comments, in order to place the claims in condition for allowance. Support for the amendments is found in Figure 2, boxes 180, 50a, and 50b; and page 9, line 23, to page 10, line 16, of the specification. Applicants respectfully submit that no new matter has been presented. Claims 1 and 8 remain pending. For the reasons set forth more fully below, Applicants respectfully submit that the claims as presented are allowable. Consequently, reconsideration, allowance, and passage to issue are respectfully requested.

Applicants would like to thank the Examiner for the phone interview of December 18, 2008. The 35 U.S.C. §103 rejections and possible amendments for overcoming the rejections were discussed. We appreciate the courtesy and helpfulness of the Examiner in the interview. The claims have been amended in light of the points made by the Examiner in the interview.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §112

Examiner Stated:

Claim 1 [is] rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite...

In response, claim 1 has been amended to address the above-referenced rejection. Specifically, the word "unvalidated" has been replaced with the word "invalidated." Applicants respectfully submit that claim 1, as amended, now complies with 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103

Examiner Stated:

Claims 1 and 8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lee et al., (6,837,428) in view of Trika et al. (2005/0131761) further in view of Rando et al., (5,128,520). ...

Applicants respectfully traverse the Examiner's rejections. The present invention provides a method for processing coupons by a self checkout system, where the self checkout system comprises at least one self checkout station coupled to a server. In accordance with the present invention, the method includes receiving a coupon from a customer, where the coupon is a paper coupon that is fed into a coupon reader of the at least one self checkout stations; attempting to validate the coupon against at least one item scanned by the customer after the couple reader receives the coupon from the customer; allowing the customer to choose whether to store the invalidated coupon, and if the customer chooses to store the invalidated coupon, converting the paper coupon into an electronic coupon. The method also includes collecting tracking information related to the coupon and storing the tracking information in a file at the server; transmitting the electronic coupon from the one self checkout station to the server; destroying the paper coupon after the paper coupon has been converted into an electronic coupon. The method also includes storing the electronic coupon into one of two coupon pools at the server if the coupon fails to validate against the at least one item, where one coupon pool is a global pool having coupons stored in the global pool which are accessible by all customers, where the other coupon pool is a personal pool that is associated with the customer such that coupons stored in the personal pool are accessible only by the customer, where the tracking information comprises the coupon pool in which the coupon

is stored, where the stored electronic coupon can be utilized at a subsequent sales transaction, where the global pool allows the second customer to search the global pool for a coupon that validates against an item scanned by the second customer during the subsequent sales transaction, where the global pool allows a second customer in the subsequent sales transaction to utilize the coupon, where a value of the coupon is deducted from a price of the item if the coupon and the item are validated, and where the personal pool allows the customer to access the global pool, select at least one coupon in the global pool, and transfer the selected coupon to a personal account at the server. The global pool, personal pool, and coupon tracking file are each stored in a separate location at the server. The method also includes allowing the customer to search one or more of the global pool and the personal pool for coupons that can be applied to any scanned items by the customer. The cited references do not teach or suggest these features, as discussed below.

Lee discloses a self-checkout apparatus. A self-checkout system includes a first conveyor having a security tunnel which measures a characteristic of a product placed on the conveyor. A code identifying the product is first input into the system through UPC scanning or other input means, and then placed on the conveyor. When the characteristic of the product is measured (e.g., weight, height, width, length), it is compared to corresponding information within the system. If the data matches or is within a predetermined tolerance, the product is transported down the conveyor to a second conveyor, which further transports the product to a bagging area. When the customer is finished scanning products, an input device allows the customer to select self-payment through either cash, credit, debit, or other means (e.g., debt, store credit and the like).

Other features include automatic security tag deactivation and coupon redemption.

(Abstract.)

Trika discloses a system and method for providing a reward-based digital mobile coupon environment, where the digital coupons may be shared among peers. Consumers utilize mobile digital coupon carriers having digital representations of coupons. Sharing of coupons among peers may be rewarded with additional discounts or points. The digital coupon carriers communicate with electronic coupon terminals at retail locations for automatic coupon redemption. A coupon may correspond to a globally unique identifier in order to track usage, sharing and redemption. Coupon use and sharing may be dependent upon stored user profiles, merchant profiles and policies, or programs embedded in the coupon. (Abstract.)

Rando discloses a scanner with coupon validation. A point of sale (POS) bar code scanner such as in common use in retail stores includes provision for reading bar coded redemption coupons (or other bar coded documents redeemable for value) in a manner secure from a human operator. Integration of functions between the POS scanner and the coupon reader varies with different embodiments described. Through software associated with bar code decoding logic, a comparison is made between information on a validation coupon and information on items presented for purchase, and a decision is made as to whether the redemption coupon is valid and redeemable in this transaction. In one embodiment, the bar code scanner simply receives the redemption coupon face down on the product scanner window, and integrated decode logic of the scanner identifies the bar code as belonging to a redemption coupon, then makes the comparison and validation of the coupon for the particular transaction. In some embodiments of the invention, the

POS product scanner has a special beam exit window through which the scanning beam is diverted when it is signified that a redemption coupon is to be read, with a coupon reading scan pattern. After validation the coupon may be punched or otherwise cancelled, and/or sent to a secure container. Several types of securing devices are disclosed, for preventing subsequent use of redeemed coupons. (Abstract.)

Lee fails to teach or suggest the storing step “wherein the global pool, personal pool, and coupon tracking file are each stored in a separate location at the server,” as recited in amended independent claim 1. The Examiner referred generally to paragraphs 0017, 0022-25, 0029-0032, and 0035-0036 of Trika as teaching this feature. However, nowhere do these paragraphs specifically teach or suggest the storing step, “wherein the global pool, personal pool, and coupon tracking file are each stored in a separate location at the server.” Paragraph 0023 of Trika merely mentions that the coupons are “stored on the server 202,” and does not specifically describe where the coupons are stored relative to each other. There is no mention of global or personal pools of coupons and no mention of how such pools of coupons might be stored relative to each other. Furthermore, nowhere does Trika teach or suggest a coupon tracking file, or that such a file is stored separately from the general and personal pools.

Lee fails to teach or suggest that a “personal pool allows the customer to access the global pool, select at least one coupon in the global pool, and transfer the selected coupon to a personal account at the server,” as recited in amended independent claim 1. The Examiner referred generally to paragraphs 0017, 0022-25, 0029-0032, and 0035-0036 of Trika as teaching this feature. However, none of these paragraphs specifically

describe both a global pool and a personal pool or a selected coupon being transferred from a global pool to a personal pool.

Therefore, Lee in view of Trika, in further view of Rando does not teach or suggest the combination of steps as recited in amended independent claim 1, and this claim is thus allowable over the cited references.

Dependent claim 8

Amended dependent claim 8 depends from amended independent claim 1. Accordingly, the above-articulated arguments related to amended independent claim 1 apply with equal force to claim 8, which is thus allowable over the cited references for at least the same reasons as claim 1. Dependent claim 8 is also allowable based upon the added limitations that distinguish it over the cited art.

Applicants agree with the Examiner that Lee, Trika, and Rando in combination do not disclose the analyzing, modifying, and implementing steps. The Examiner has relied on paragraphs 0013, 0037, and 0045 of Mastrianni as disclosing the modifying step.

Mastrianni discloses a coupon exchange network and service bureau. The invention provides methods, apparatus and systems for a coupon service facilitated by a coupon service bureau that manages the easy creation and exchange of targeted coupons created by users and other coupon associates. Moreover, immediate coupon information may be provided at the store using coupon devices that notify users about product information and the best discounts that are available at the current store or further advantages available at other stores. (Abstract.)

However, paragraphs 0013 and 0037 of Mastrianni fail to mention the manufacturer performing any functions. Paragraph 0045 of Mastrianni mentions a manufacturer modifying a coupon, but fails to mention or suggest the manufacturer performing the analyzing or implementing steps as recited in the present invention.

The Examiner has relied on column 2, line 63, through column 3, lines 1-6, of Goodwin as disclosing the implementing step. However, these sections of Goodwin fail to describe the manufacturer performing an implementing step.

Therefore, Lee in view of Trika, in further view of Rando, in further view of Mastrianni, in further view of Goodwin does not teach or suggest the combination of steps as recited in amended dependent claim 8, and this claim is thus allowable over the cited references.

CONCLUSION

Applicants' attorney believes this application is in condition for allowance. Should any unresolved issues remain, Examiner is invited to call Applicants' attorney at the telephone number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

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